

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS STATE 112794

USDEL SECRETARY FOR HODDING CARTER FROM S/PRS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN

SUBJECT: PRESS ITEM

NO. 34

HEREWITH TEXT OF MARVIN KALB FIRST LINE REPORT
TUESDAY MORNING, MAY 17.

BEGIN TEXT

THE NEXT MAJOR ROUND OF SOVIET-AMERICAN TALKS BEGINS TOMORROW IN GENEVA.

TWO DAYS OF TALKS, PERHAPS THREE, BETWEEN SECRETARY OF STATE VANCE AND SOVIET FOREIGN MINISTER GROMYKO OPEN IN GENEVA TOMORROW. THE DIPLOMATS WILL SIGN AN AGREEMENT BANNING THE USE OF THE ATMOSPHERE FOR HOSTILE PURPOSES, AN AGREEMENT REACHED A YEAR OR SO AGO, BUT SIGNATURE HAS
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PAGE 02 STATE 112794

BEEN DELAYED UNTIL NOW. BOTH SIDES DECIDED THIS IS A GOOD TIME SINCE, IN SO MANY OTHER RESPECTS, SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONS HAVE HIT A ROCKY ROAD IN RECENT MONTHS. THE SIGNING OF THE AGREEMENT MAY CONJURE UP VISIONS OF OLDTIME DETENTE. IT IS ALWAYS POSSIBLE THAT AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE SOVIET AND OF THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENTS A COMPROMISE IS NOW

BEING SECRETLY ARRANGED ON THE CRITICAL QUESTION OF STRATEGIC ARMS, A COMPROMISE THAT WOULD BREAK THE DEADLOCK AND ADVANCE THE PROSPECTS OF AN AGREEMENT BEFORE THE CURRENT ARMS DEAL EXPIRES THIS OCTOBER.

BUT IF SUCH A COMPROMISE IS BEING ARRANGED, IT IS ALSO BEING KEPT A DEEP, DARK SECRET. DESPITE THE OPENNESS GENERALLY ASCRIBED TO THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION, VERY FEW OFFICIALS IN FACT ARE AWARE OF THE PRESIDENT'S PLANNING. IF ONE WERE TO ASSUME THAT PAUL WARNKE, THE PRESIDENT'S TOP ARMS CONTROL NEGOTIATOR, IS ONE OF THOSE INVOLVED IN THE PLANNING THEN ONE COULD ALSO ASSUME THAT THE EXPECTATIONS FOR A BREAKTHROUGH DURING THE UPCOMING ROUND OF TALKS IN GENEVA ARE VERY LOW. WARNKE, BEFORE HE LEFT, INDICATED TO REPORTERS THAT BOTH SIDES ARE STICKING TO THEIR ORIGINAL POSITIONS. NOTHING HAS BEEN ALTERED, AT LEAST PUBLICLY, AND COMPROMISE SEEMS TO BE A LONG WAY OFF. WARNKE SAID THAT THE AMERICANS HAVE EXPLAINED THEIR REJECTED PROPOSALS TO THE RUSSIANS AT GREAT LENGTH. HE ALSO SAID THAT A GOOD NEGOTIATOR DOES NOT PULL A NEW PROPOSAL OUT OF HIS BAG THE MOMENT THE OLD ONE HAS BEEN REJECTED. MEANING, THE US IS STILL HOLDING TIGHT APPARENTLY WAITING FOR THE SOVIET UNION TO COME UP WITH THE PROPER COMPROMISE.

ON THE SURFACE, THEN, DEADLOCK PERSISTS, SO BLEAKLY AMONG TOP OFFICIALS THAT ONE IS ALMOST TEMPTED TO SPECULATE THAT THERE IS A DELIBERATE HOLD-DOWN ON EXPECTATION, ALL TALK ABOUT THE VANCE-GROMYKO MEETING, THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 03 STATE 112794

PRECEDED THEIR FIRST GET TOGETHER IN MOSCOW WHEN VANCE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THEY WOULD BE ABLE TO AGREE ON A FRAMEWORK FOR NEGOTIATING A SECOND STRATEGIC ARMS AGREEMENT.

THE SECOND MAJOR TOPIC IN GENEVA IS THE MIDDLE EAST. BOTH RUSSIA AND AMERICA ARE CO-CHAIRMEN OF THE GENEVA PEACE CONFERENCE WHICH MET ONLY ONCE, BACK IN DECEMBER 1973, AND ACCOMPLISHED LITTLE MORE THAN SET ITSELF UP AS A GOAL FOR THE FUTURE. AT THE MOMENT, THE US IS PLAYING THE LEADING ROLE IN TRYING TO MEDIATE ARAB-ISRAELI DIFFERENCES. PRESIDENT CARTER HAS MET WITH THE HEADS OF ISRAEL, EGYPT, SYRIA AND JORDAN. SAUDI ARABIA'S PRINCE FAHD ARRIVES HERE AT THE END OF THE MONTH. TO WHAT EXTENT VANCE WILL GIVE GROMYKO A COMPLETE FILL-IN ON THE PRESIDENT'S TALKS IS NOT KNOWN. TO WHAT EXTENT RUSSIA AND AMERICA CAN ACTUALLY WORK TOGETHER IS NOT KNOWN, EITHER. UP TO THIS POINT RUSSIAN STRATEGIC INTERESTS HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT FROM AMERICA'S IN THE MIDDLE EAST IN MANY RESPECTS. BUT IT IS

CLEAR THAT AT SOME POINT IN THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS, THE
SUPERPOWERS ARE GOING TO HAVE TO COOPERATE IN RECONVENING
THE CONFERENCE AND IN ARRANGING TO POLICE THE NEW
BORDER ALIGNMENTS WHICH WILL BE INEVITABLE IN ANY PEACE
TREATY.

BIGGER PERHAPS THAN BOTH QUESTIONS OF STRATEGIC QUESTIONS
ON THE MIDDLE EAST IS WHETHER THE TWO SUPERPOWERS CAN
SUBMERGE THEIR CURRENT DIFFERENCES IN A COMMON PURSUIT
OF COMMON SENSE.

END TEXT

CHRISTOPHER

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